

The heinous Nature of Rebellion.

A
S E R M O N

Preached in the

Cathedral Church of *YORK*,

On *Thursday, August 21, 1746.*

B E F O R E

His Grace, the Lord ARCHBISHOP;

The Right Hon. the Lord Viscount IRWIN,
Lord Lieutenant of the *East-Riding*;

The Right Hon. the Lord Chief Baron PARKER;

The Honourable Mr. Baron CLARKE;
And Others;

Appointed by his Majesty's Special Commission to try the Rebels.

By *JAMES IBBETSON*, M. A.
Chaplain to the Right Reverend the Lord Bishop of *Lincoln*.

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sioners; the High-Sheriff, and the Gentlemen of the Grand-
Jury.

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GENTLEMEN of the *Grand-jury*;

T H I S

S E R M O N

Is most humbly Inscribed by

The AUTHOR.

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NUMBERS, XXV. 5.

And Moses said unto the Judges of Israel, slay ye every one his Men that were joined unto Baal-Peor.

THE miseries that accrue to Society from rebellion and disobedience, have always been esteemed, by wise and good men, a very prudential recommendation, at least, of the important Duty of Loyalty, and a steady Allegiance to the established Government. This principle, which has sometimes been successfully, though improperly, applied, to pacify the minds of men under the mighty oppressions of Tyranny and arbitrary Power, may certainly with great reason and assurance be insisted on, to enforce Obedience and Subjection to the best King, and the best Constitution under heaven. Insurrections among a people, to preserve their civil and religious Rights to themselves and their Posterity, are excusable from the necessity of such violent measures, when no other means are left for their security; but a Rebellion, that tends to introduce the most illegal oppressions, has in it all the aggravating circumstances of Infamy and Guilt. Under a Free Government, the Preservation of the public Peace, and the Security of every thing that is dear and valuable, are, next to the obligations of Honour and Conscience, the strongest ties of Allegiance. Whosoever offends against either, is an enemy.

enemy to his Country; and very justly comes under the same sentence of condemnation, with the *Israelites* in my Text.

The work of Order and Government, is to maintain Peace, and Safety, and Happiness; to preserve every member of the Community in his just Rights; and to continue Friendship and Good-Will amongst men. Society supposes thus much, and depends upon it: Without it, It cannot subsist. In the state of Nature, (for want of the protection of the Civil Authority) we could have no quiet enjoyment of any thing; every man would be perpetually exposed to violences and injuries. Notwithstanding the principles of kindness and benevolence, which are implanted in the human breast, the world would be in a state of War: So that all our quiet, and security from fear and danger, from the frauds and oppressions of the crafty and the powerful, is entirely owing to Government. Now Rebellion defeats all these wise purposes, and happy effects; it is therefore as great an evil to Society, as the established Government, whatever it be, is a blessing.

One would wonder then, that a multitude of people, blessed alike under the Protection and wise Administration of the same Government, should disagree among themselves; that, instead of pleasure and satisfaction in the comfortable possession of every thing that is truly valuable, there should be provocations and civil dissensions; that, where an ample foundation is laid, of love and goodwill, of mutual kindness and beneficence, there should be raised up ill-will, displeasure, and enmity. Look into History, and you will find, that many conspiracies and rebellions have been contrived and abetted, in every age of the world, by men of ruined and desperate fortunes;

tunes; Ambition too, and Avarice, have a powerful influence on weak and corrupt minds, to make men false to the Public Interest; but nothing is more destructive to Government, than a mistaken Zeal.

There is a kind of progression in Political, as well as Moral, evil. The sin of Rebellion, like all other sins, takes its rise from small beginnings; it grows gradually into stubbornness and inveteracy. To this purpose I will quote the words of an eminent Divine; "Let any man but call to his mind, what a little matter it was at first, that biassed him to incline to such a Cause or Party; and how that Inclination carried him to wishing well to it; and that to Affection; and Affection to siding with it; and that to Zeal; and Zeal to the promoting and advancing it; and that to opposing all its hinderances; and Opposition to Vexation; and that to Ill-will; and Ill-will to Mischief; and that to Hatred; and thence to Violence, and Outrage, and Cruelty and Persecution."—Jealousies and ill-natured Surmises, which are the chief and more observable gradations of Rebellion, produce Discontents and Animosities; they clog the wheels of Government, till at last they overturn it. Many false and distracted notions concerning the Origin and Foundation of Government, have a direct tendency to introduce Tyranny and Arbitrary Power. Wicked and designing men are very assiduous in propagating these destructive principles; they know, they can loose nothing, but may possibly be great gainers, in the general disorder and confusion. Or, if men will give themselves up, to be swayed by selfish and partial estimations of Happiness; to be governed by any false or corrupt Interests; to be blinded by the prejudices of Party; or to be transported by violent and furious Passions; no wonder, if they bring their Understandings
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to their Wills, and bend their publick Judgment of things to their private Interests, which way soever they lead them. In these cases, they will naturally take the wrong way, and think themselves in the right; they may confound all the obligations of Honour, and Conscience; be guilty of the blackest crimes, malice, and perjury, and murder; and, which is a complication of them all, Rebellion; and yet all the while be verily persuaded, they are doing their Country good service. And what shall we say of those, who are quarrelsome, wrathful, and malicious; who contrive ruin and destruction to their fellow creatures, for Religion's sake? Are barbarous, inhuman, and bloody, to serve the ends of Christianity? Is this the pure, undefiled Religion of Christ? Is not the Virtue of a Heathen far more valuable? How strange it is, that any should be so mistaken in their Zeal for God, and his Glory, to do such things as Reason declares unlawful, and human Nature startles at!

But farther, The security of our Civil and Religious Rights being closely and essentially connected with the Public Peace, so that every attempt on the one threatens destruction to the other, this, which ought to be a very powerful motive to a faithful and steady allegiance, is a high aggravation of their guilt, who depart from it. Very great cause have we to bless God, for that happy Government, which we live under; that excellent Constitution; that just Administration of a wise and gracious Prince on the Throne; under the influences whereof, we enjoy more liberty, more plenty, and more security from all manner of injury and oppression, than any Nation under heaven. Can we imagine then any thing more base and flagitious, than an attempt to deprive us at once of every thing that is dear and valuable

able to a Free People? That a set of men, who have tasted the blessings of a limited Monarchy, should concur with the malicious and implacable enemies of our peace, in their restless attempts to establish Tyranny and Arbitrary Power in its stead, will hardly appear credible to future Ages. Is it nothing, that our glorious *English* Ancestors endured so much, in the cause of Liberty? That they stemmed, with so much courage and resolution, the torrent of Popery and Arbitrary Power, that was breaking in upon them? And are these become at last such desirable blessings, that any man of common sense and common honesty, should endeavour to wade to them through a sea of blood, and the miseries of a civil war? Shall our Religion, our Liberties, and our Properties, fall a sacrifice to the treachery, and ingratitude, of a base and desperate banditti? At the very time too, when Providence seems to have laid the best foundation for our lasting peace and security?

We are not so utterly abandoned to sin and wickedness, but might hope for better things, than *this*, from the protection of the Almighty; who will never permit such a calamitous Revolution to take place, unless it be, to punish a wicked and perverse people.

Better things, than *this*, might be expected, (and we have not been disappointed in these reasonable expectations,) from the Public Courage of our people. The unanimity, and earnestness, of all ranks and degrees of men, in support of our Lawful Sovereign, were no signs, that He has forfeited, in the least, the Favour of Heaven, or the Love and Esteem of his Subjects.

A good Prince is the most comprehensive earthly blessing, that man can ask, or God can bestow. Happy
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are we of this nation, who are thus blessed! Who behold a Prince on the Throne, who deserves to sit there, as well by his Virtues, as by his Lawful Right;—whose paternal affection is not more remarkable in protecting his faithful people, than in bringing the rebellious and ungovernable ones to condign punishment;—who makes no other use of that power, which the laws have invested him with, than to invigorate them, and give them their proper course;—and on whom, the malice of Traitors could never fasten any suspicion, of pursuing measures destructive, in the least instance, of the civil or religious rights of the Community. And whom would they have given us, in exchange for Him? One, who has been educated in sight of all the arts and practices of Tyranny and Superstition; and can never demonstrate his gratitude to his benefactors, by any remarkable instance, that would not stab the vitals of the *English* Constitution.

Slavery is so vile and miserable a state of man, and so directly opposite to the generous temper and courage of our Nation, it is hardly to be believed, that any one, who is born a Briton, will ever submit to it; yet, strange infatuation! the rebellion, that has been raised among us, had it been successful, would infallibly have introduced the complicated Tyranny of Popery and Arbitrary Power. These are the blessings, which some have been contending for; these would be the rewards of their Undertaking.

The manner too, in which such an entire change could only have been effected, by the woeful desolations of fire and sword, is a shocking aggravation of their guilt. Yet the dreadful barbarities of a fierce and rapacious host of men, would have been but the beginnings

nings of sorrows, and are not comparable to the miseries, that would ensue; the utter extinction of Property in our national funds; the annihilation of every Royal Grant, and every legal Act, by which many, of all orders of men amongst us, are invested with their Honours, Estates, and Fortunes; Claims of forfeitures, and Impeachments of treason; and many other devices, which rapine, revenge, and the insolence of conquest, would invent, and authorize.

The Principles, upon which the Legality of the Established Government is maintained, ought perhaps chiefly to be insisted on, *at this time*; because few of the rebel prisoners to be tried *here*, by his Majesty's special Commission, (being most of them the lowest of the people) have bound themselves by Oaths, and the most solemn engagements of fidelity to Our Lawful Sovereign. Yet in treating of the heinous nature of Rebellion, we must not omit the most aggravating circumstance of all, the direct and open violation of the strictest Obligations of Honour, and Conscience.

The highest degree of Rebellion, consists in levying war against the Lawful Sovereign; but there are several tendencies towards it, which they who are guilty of, are, in some sort, guilty of Rebellion.

As, first, an indifference, and want of all concern for the established Government; when, though a man has never directly forfeited his allegiance, a very small occasion would tempt him to do it.

Another tendency to this sin, and a great degree of it, is withdrawing from the Publick, the proper marks and testimonies of his faithful and steady attachments to

the Civil Government; by refusing his assistance in times of imminent danger, or not employing his utmost diligence, in discovering the authors, and abettors, of treasons and rebellious disturbances, and bringing them to punishment. At such a juncture, the protection, which all receive from the same Government, calls upon the Gratitude and Self-Interest of all, to support It.

Another tendency is a light temper of mind, which easily receives impressions from such, as lie in wait to seduce men from Loyalty to their King, and Fidelity to their Country. When men are not well settled and confirmed in principles of Liberty, they are apt to be imposed upon by every trifling piece of political sophistry; or by pretence of Conscience, the result perhaps of some crude notions of a *divine, hereditary, indefeasible, Right* in Princes, to enslave their people.

That there can be no such thing, is evident from this single consideration; because Government, being wisely contrived for the good of the Governed, to preserve them from violence and injury, cannot be of the nature of Property, which is the Right every man has, to use any of the inferior creatures, for his sole benefit and advantage. The sword is not given to the Magistrate for his own sake, but for the sake of the Community; to enforce obedience to the positive Laws of the Society, made conformable to the Laws of Nature, for the Public Good.

On this Principle it follows, that the same Authority, which made at first a Lawful Ruler, and established a Form of Government, must settle likewise the Right of Succession. Some Moral, as well as Natural Incapacities, are sufficient grounds for a formal Exclusion; or should the
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the Supreme Executor of the Laws endeavour to invade the Properties and Liberties of the people, and to set up his own Arbitrary Will for the measure and rule of Government, by this breach of trust, he forfeits the Power that was put into his hands, for quite different purposes, and it devolves to the people; who have a right to resume their original Liberty, and to provide for their own security, by establishing a new Government.

Whenever such a new Government is established, a sober man must needs have a strong conviction on his mind, of the important Duty of obeying *the Powers in being*; and with regard to those, who are dissatisfied with the Lawfulness of the established Government, which is most conducive to the happiness and security of every individual, it is certainly very bad policy, to rebel against it, rather than be safe and quiet under its protection. Or if they plead Conscience, we may ask them, where they have learned, that Rebellion is the proper remedy in such cases?

Let them examine the whole history of the Old Testament, there they will clearly see, that after any Revolution that happened, the people acquiesced always in the new possession; and the Prophets, that were among them, never charged them with this, nor required them to return back to those Princes, or Families, which they had shaken off. We read indeed, * that some of the Jews, about the time of the Apostles, upon political views more probably than any real scruples, refused to take an Oath to *Cæsar*, though the rest of the Nation had done it; yet they were not thereby excused from their Obedience to the established Govern-

* *Josephus Ant.* xvii. 3.

ment. St. Paul determined with great precision, that they, in whom the Laws of any Country have invested the Supreme Authority, are there the *Ministers of God*, to whom every member of the Community must needs * *be subject, not only for wrath, but also for conscience sake.*

This is a Duty, which men are often to be † *put in mind of, to be subject to Principalities and Powers, and to obey Magistrates.* Reason and Religion, our Duty and our Interest, enforce it. Can any thing be more unnatural then, than a wicked unprovoked Rebellion, in opposition to all these? When the Interest of the King and the Community, is the same, which is the happiness we justly boast of, a combination against the one is properly an attempt to destroy the other. What an aggravation then is it of Treason, which, simply considered, is a crime of the blackest nature, when in violation of the strongest obligations of Duty and Allegiance, a set of deluded people endeavour, by secret combinations and open conspiracies, to dethrone the Defender of their Laws, their Liberties, and their Religion?

I would not seem to irritate Justice against those unhappy wretches, who are under the prosecution of the Law; I mean not to aggravate their guilt; it is indeed past my skill; it hardly leaves room for Mercy, to intercede with Justice. What a small compensation can the lives of many rebels be, for the blood of one honest loyal Subject, which has been shed in the cause of Liberty? Yet we find *here* already, a more popular compassion excited for a few base traitors to their King and Country, than for many Patriots who died gloriously in

* *Rom, xiii. 5, 6.* † *Titus iii. 1.*

the defence of them both. Mercy, we must acknowledge, is the fairest jewel in the Royal Diadem; it is that Virtue, by which a Prince approaches nearest to Him, whose Vice-gerent and Representative He is; it corrects indeed the rigour of Justice, yet must not supersede it. Compassion towards individuals, if it does not keep in view the good of the whole Community, degenerates into Cruelty. The Wisdom of the Government, which will not suffer itself, at any time, to be attacked with impunity, knows best to execute *Justice in Mercy*, in such manner, as will be consistent with its own future Security.

The *present solemnity* must needs excite in every one of us, a thankful remembrance of the Divine Providence, in rescuing us from the imminent dangers we were in, and supporting Our most Gracious Sovereign on the Throne of these Kingdoms. * *Let the King ever rejoice in Thy Strength, O Lord; Let Him be exceeding glad of Thy Salvation.* † *Blessed be the Lord His God, which hath delivered up the men, that lift up their hands against Him. Even so perish all His Enemies.*

The Goodness of God, who *hath given us such a Deliverance as this*, when our Eyes were ready to fail us for fear, and for looking after those dreadful calamities, that were coming upon us, doth naturally lead us to Repentance and Reformation of Life, *least a worse thing*, if possible, *come unto us*. This is the Period, which seems particularly to be marked out, for us to become one People; by a Dutiful Obedience to our Prince, and by an uniform and steady attachment to the true Interest of our Country.

* *Psalms* xxi. 1. † 2 *Sam.* 18. 28.

Let us then implore the Almighty, to perfect *the Work, He hath wrought in us*; that His Majesty may reign long and happy in the united affections of His People; that under Him, we may *lead quiet and peaceable lives, in all godliness and honesty*; for His Mercy's sake in Christ Jesus, Who is *King of Kings, and Lord of Lords*.

To whom be ascribed all Honour and Glory, now and for ever, Amen.

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